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NO.8 JAN.
US $1.75
CAN $1.85

SEGA®

KNUCKLES™

THE ECHIDNA

APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY

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HEROIC AGE

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KNUCKLES™

BOOK EIGHT

DARK VENGEANCE

Part Two of Three

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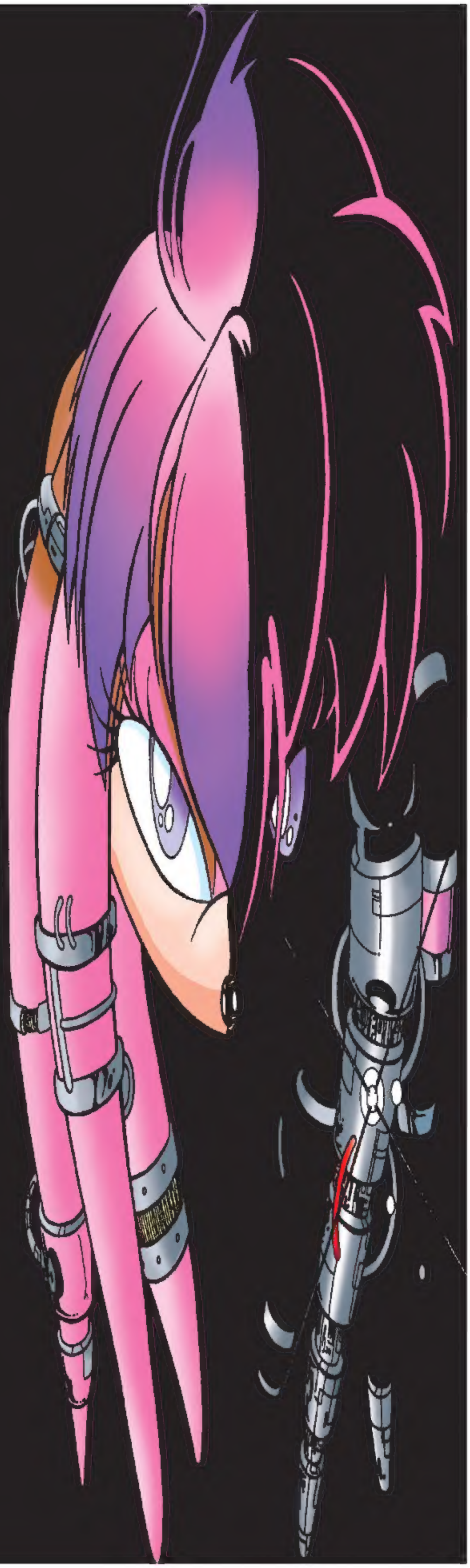


BORN TO THE MOST NOBLE OF ECHIDNA HOUSES, THE LATEST TO CONTINUE THE FAMILY HERITAGE AND RESPONSIBILITY AS GUARDIAN OF THE FLOATING ISLAND, DEFENDER OF ALL FROM THE FORCES OF EVIL FROM THE WORLD BEYOND AS WELL AS THOSE WHO WOULD THREATEN WITHIN, HE IS NONE OTHER THAN KNUCKLES THE ECHIDNA!

LAST ISSUE, KNUCKLES AND JULIE-SU ENGAGED IN A THOUGHTFUL DISCUSSION INVOLVING PLENTY OF QUESTIONS BUT FEW ANSWERS. DECIDING THERE WAS ONLY ONE PARTY THEY COULD TURN TO, THEY SOUGHT OUT ARCHIMEDES, THE ENIGMATIC FIRE-ANT WHO SERVES AS BOTH FRIEND AND MENTOR. DURING THEIR QUEST, THEY DISCOVERED EVIDENCE THAT SOMETHING BAD HAD HAPPENED TO THE CHAOTIX. EVIDENCE WHICH POINTED TO NOT JUST ONE ENEMY, BUT TWO.

MAKING THEIR WAY ACROSS THE ISLAND, KNUCKLES AND JULIE-SU WERE CONFRONTED ONCE AGAIN BY A BEING MORE POWERFUL THAN ANY OTHER THEY HAD EVER ENCOUNTERED.

THINGS DIDN'T MATTER AS MUCH WHEN I THOUGHT I WAS *ALONE*--

--BEFORE I HAD *FRIENDS*--

--AND A *FAMILY*!

BUT WITH THE *GOOD*--

--CAME THE *BAD*--

--*ENEMIES* AND *THREATS* WAY BEYOND ANYTHING I WAS TAUGHT TO EXPECT!

AND *NOW*--

--I'M FACING THE MOST *DANGEROUS* OF THEM ALL--

KNUCKLES IN THE GAUNTLET

--ENERJAK, AN ALL-POWERFUL BEING FUELED BY THE ENERGY OF ELEVEN CHAOS EMERALDS--

--WHO, FOUR HUNDRED YEARS AGO, WAS ONCE AN ECHIDNA SCIENTIST NAMED DIMITRI!

FUNNY HOW ONE'S BLOOD RELATIVES MAKE THE WORST ENEMIES!

MY, MY, MY! EVER THE PROUD ECHIDNA, ARE WE?

NOT FOR LONG, I CAN ASSURE YOU, KNUCKLES!

I'M GOING TO BREAK YOU TOTALLY—COMPLETELY—MERCILESSLY!

YOU'RE GOING TO PAY FOR WHAT YOU DID!

WHAT I DID?!

HAVEN'T YOU GOT THAT *BACKWARDS*?

YOU *FOOL*!

YOU'RE ONLY THE *LATEST* CONTINUATION OF *MISGUIDED* BELIEFS THAT WERE FORMED LONG BEFORE YOU WERE *BORN*!

YOUR KIND COULD NEVER *COMPREHEND* THE *LIMITLESS* POWER I ALONE POSSESS!

POWER TO TRANSPORT YOU FROM THE *FLOATING ISLAND* TO *HERE*--

--AND CREATE THE *AIR POCKET* YOU NOW *EXIST* IN!

FUNNY--

--I WAS THINKING THAT WITH ALL YOUR SO-CALLED POWER WHAT A *GLASS JAW* YOU HAVE!*

*KNUX AND ENERJAK DUKED IT OUT IN THE THIRD PART OF KNUCKLES ARCHIVES #1! -- EDITOR

NOT TO MENTION IT WAS *YOU* GOING *BYE-BYE* AT THE END THERE!*

* SAME PART, AND HE SURE DID! -- EDITOR AGAIN

YOU THINK YOU SUCCEEDED DUE TO YOUR OWN *CLEVERNESS*?!

A *DOLT* SUCH AS YOU COULD NEVER HOPE TO OVER-COME ONE SUCH AS I!

ALLOW ME TO *DEMONSTRATE*!

FAAWHOOM

OBSERVE! FROM THE SURFACE OF MOBIAN *MOON* TO THE DEEPEST, DARKEST DEPTHS OF MOBIAN *OCEANS*!

THIS IS WHAT REAL, *ABSOLUTE* POWER IS ALL ABOUT--

--THE ABILITY TO DO *ANYTHING* WITH BUT A *THOUGHT*!

I GATHER FROM YOUR EXPRESSION--

"--THE *REALITY* OF YOUR SITUATION IS BEGINNING TO *SINK* IN!"

I HAD JUST ABOUT GIVEN UP *HOPE*--

GLUB! GLUB!

GLUB! GLUB!

--OF EVER *FINDING* YOU, JULIE-SU!

WE SUFFER ENOUGH *LOSSES* WITHOUT *ABANDONING* ONE OF OUR OWN!

STILL--

--I'M OBLIGATED TO *INQUIRE* ABOUT YOUR *ACTIVITIES* SINCE YOU'VE BEEN ON YOUR OWN!

DIMITRI FOUND YOU WITH *KNUCKLES*, SO YOU UNDERSTAND MY *CONCERN* WITH YOUR EXPOSURE TO *RADICAL* IDEAS.

I *WAS* WITH THE *GUARDIAN*, COMMANDER--

--IT WAS MERELY A RELATIONSHIP OF *CONVENIENCE*.

WE *FOUGHT* MORE OFTEN THAN NOT, RIGHT FROM THE *START* OF OUR *CHANCE* ENCOUNTER.*

*A SOMEWHAT *ALTERED* VERSION OF EVENTS THAT OCCURRED IN EARLIER THIS ARCHIVE!

I WAS SIMPLY *USING* HIM TO FIND *YOU*--AND THE *LEGION*! NEVER IN MY WILDEST DREAMS DID I THINK THE GREAT DIMITRI HIMSELF WOULD RETURN ME TO THE FOLD.

CONSIDERING YOU'VE *ALWAYS* BEEN AN *OUT-STANDING* SOLDIER TO OUR CAUSE--

--I'LL ACCEPT YOU AT YOUR WORD!

I TRUST I WON'T *REGRET* THIS DECISION!

ON MY *HONOR*, SIR!

JULIE-SU, IF I WERE TO DISCOVER *OTHERWISE*--

"--MUCH *MORE* THAN HONOR WOULD BE AT STAKE!"

THIS IS SO WEIRD! I SHOULD FEEL AT *HOME* HERE--

-- AND INSTEAD, I FEEL LIKE SUCH A *STRANGER!*

I *EXPECT* THE MEMBERS OF THIS SQUAD TO HAVE THEIR VEHICLES *READY* TO MOVE AT A MOMENT'S NOTICE!

SERGEANT RYKOR, I'M HERE TO *RESUME* MY POSITION!

IS *THAT* SO, SOLDIER?

YOU SO MUCH AS GIVE ME REASON TO *DOUBT* YOUR LOYALTY--

-- AND YOU'LL SEE *STARS* IN BROAD *DAYLIGHT!*

IS THAT ***CLEAR?***

AS A BELL, SERGEANT!

NOW, UNLESS YOU INTEND TO *USE* THAT THING--

"—I'D LIKE TO CARRY ON MY *DUTIES!*"

CONSTABLE REMINGTON?

M'LADY, THIS IS A *SURPRISE!*

TO *WHAT* DO I OWE THE HONOR?

I NEED A *FAVOR*, CONSTABLE--

--AND I BELIEVE YOU TO BE THE *ONLY* ONE IN *AUTHORITY* TO ASSIST ME!

I LIVE TO *SERVE*, LADY LARA-LE!

ALLOW ME.

THANK YOU, KIND SIR!

NOW THEN--

--HOW MAY I BE OF *SERVICE*?

THIS *MAY* COME AS A SURPRISE TO YOU--

--BUT I NEED TO CONTACT THE GUARDIAN *LOCKE!*

FROM WHAT I CAN TELL, YOU'RE MY ONLY *HOPE* TO LOCATE MY *EX-HUSBAND!*

FORGIVE ME, M'LADY, BUT ISN'T YOUR *SON* THE *CURRENT* GUARDIAN?

WE *BOTH* KNOW THE ANSWER TO THAT!

IT'S FOR *HIS* SAKE THAT I'M *HERE*!

CONSTABLE REMINGTON--

--I HAVE TO SPEAK TO A *FATHER* ABOUT HIS *SON*!

CAN'T YOU BREAK *PROTOCOLS* FOR ONCE?

FOR *THIS*?

THIS IS A DILEMMA!

MY *PREDECESSOR* HOLMES HAD *WARNED* ME ABOUT GETTING *PERSONALLY* INVOLVED--

YOU'RE TO ACT AS *OFFICIAL* LIASON, REMINGTON, AND NOTHING MORE!

THE *GUARDIANS* TEND TO PROTECT THEIR PRIVACY RATHER *INTENSELY*!

--AND NOW I'M BEING ASKED TO GO *AGAINST* THOSE-- EH?

CONSTABLE REMINGTON?

PLEASE, SIR, WON'T YOU *HELP*?

WELL?

ENERJAK CAN GO SUCK ON *RAW EGGS* BEFORE I GIVE IN TO HIM!

MY CHEST FEELS LIKE IT'S ABOUT TO *BURST*!

UH-OH!

TROUBLE! FROM DEAD-ON CENTER!

IF I *FLOAT* IN POSITION, OL SHARKEY'LL PROBABLY THINK I'M PART OF THE *LANDSCAPE*!

WHEW! MY HEAD-- GETTING WOOZY!

CAN'T TAKE MUCH-- MORE OF-- THIS!

NEED *AIR*!

WHAT TH'--?!!

AS IF I DIDN'T HAVE-- *ENOUGH* PROBLEMS, OL' *MASKFACE* HAS TO-- COME AND *GLOAT*!

GLOAT?

THAT'S MUCH TOO *MILD* A WORD TO DESCRIBE MY *DESIRES* AT THE MOMENT!

IN FACT, I AM *SO THOROUGHLY* ENJOYING--

--WATCHING YOU GIVE A WHOLE *NEW* MEANING TO BEING AT THE BOTTOM OF THE *FOOD* CHAIN!

YEAH?

"WELL, IT *AIN'T* OVER 'TIL IT'S *OVER*!"

WHA—? WH-WHERE AM I?

EASY, LOCKE! YOU'RE IN *SICK BAY*!

HAVEN! I'M *STILL* IN HAVEN!

OOOOH!

TAKE IT *EASY*, LAD! DON'T *STRAIN* YOURSELF!

WHAT ABOUT *HAWKING*? IS HE—?

STILL IN A *COMA*!

WHAT THE DEVIL HAPPENED, LOCKE?

THE *ALARM*!

I SUGGEST WE TABLE OUR DISCUSSION, FATHER! THAT SOUNDS *SERIOUS*!

BREEP! BREEP! BREEP!

WHAT *DOESN'T* AROUND *HERE*? EVERYTHING'S A *CRISIS*!

Y'KNOW, LOCKE, IT'S BEEN AWHILE SINCE I'VE HEARD YOU *LAUGH*!

BREEP!

REALLY, FATHER—

--THERE HASN'T BEEN ANYTHING TO LAUGH ABOUT IN A LONG TIME!

FUEL PLUG

WILL YOU LOOK AT THAT!

THE DARK SIDE OF OUR FAMILY STRIKES AGAIN!

SAY, ISN'T THAT--?

YES, FATHER, IT LOOKS LIKE KNUCKLES' NEW FRIEND--

--AND IT APPEARS SHE'S REJOINED HER FORMER COMRADES!

CALL

SOMETHING'S VERY WRONG HERE!

NO SIGN OF KNUCKLES--THE DARK LEGION GETTING READY TO STRIKE--!

YES, BUT STRIKE WHERE?

WHERE ELSE BUT--

ECHIDNAOPOLIS!

IN MY OPINION--

"--I DO BELIEVE UNDER THESE *CONDITIONS* THAT *EXTREME MEASURES* ARE CALLED FOR! "

GLOOHH!

GASP!

OH NO!

OH, YES!
YOUR ONLY HOPE IS FOR YOU TO KISS MY FEET AND BEG FOR MERCY!
FAT CHANCE OF THAT, BUB!
OBVIOUSLY--
"--WE HAVEN'T REACHED YOUR BREAKING POINT YET!"
HEY! HEY! CHECK IT OUT!
DOES THE MAN KNOW WHAT'S WHAT OR WHAT?
THE WITCH IS FLASHING HER COLORS!
IT APPEARS BAD, BUT THERE HAS TO BE MORE TO THE STORY!
I'M WILLING TO LISTEN!
MIGHTY, M'MAN! A FOX IS A FOX, AND MY DADDY TOLD ME NEVER TO TRUST ONE!
LAST TIME I CHECKED, VECTOR, JULIE-SU LOOKED LIKE AN ECHIDNA TO ME!
YEAH, YEAH.
THE SLIPPERY CROC DOES IT AGAIN. NO ROPE CAN HOLD ME DOWN!
WILL YOU CLOWNS CUT OUT THE RACKET?!
SINCE YOU DON'T LIKE MY RAP--
--WHY NOT GRAB A NAP!
SNATCH!

BONK!

SWEET DREAMS, PIGEON!

UNNGHH!

HOLD IT!

THE DARK BABE HERSELF!

WHO--?

WHA--?

LOOK OUT! SHE'S--

GASP!

I--KNEW-- YOU--WEREN'T-- UGH!

KOFF-- KOFF!

VERY GOOD, MY DEAR! VERY GOOD!

WILL THAT BE ALL, COMMANDER?

JUST ONE THING MORE, SOLDIER--

CLIK

=ZT!

"--FINISH THEM OFF!"

LET'S SEE HOW WELL YOUR BRAVADO DOES YOU HERE!

WE'RE AT LEAST 30,000 KILOMETERS ABOVE THE SURFACE OF THE FLOATING ISLAND!

Y-YOU-- D-DON'T-- S-SAY!

Q-QUITE-- S-SOOTHING--U-UP-- H-HERE--HUH?

I-I--O-OUGHTA-- V-VISIT-- M-M-MORE-- O-OF-TEN!

ENOUGH!!!

I AM THROUGH TOYING WITH YOU!

JUST AS OTHERS HAVE LEARNED WHAT IT MEANS TO FACE MY WRATH--

--SO WILL YOU AS WELL!

"I REFUSE TO ACCEPT THE POSSIBILITY OF THEY'RE *NOT* BEING *ANY* WAY OUT OF THIS--"

--THAT WE CAN'T *FIND*, GRANDFATHER DEO!

HAVE YOU *FORGOTTEN*, ARCHIMEDES?

WE'RE UP AGAINST A CREATURE SO POWERFUL IT *DEFIES* THE *IMAGINATION*!

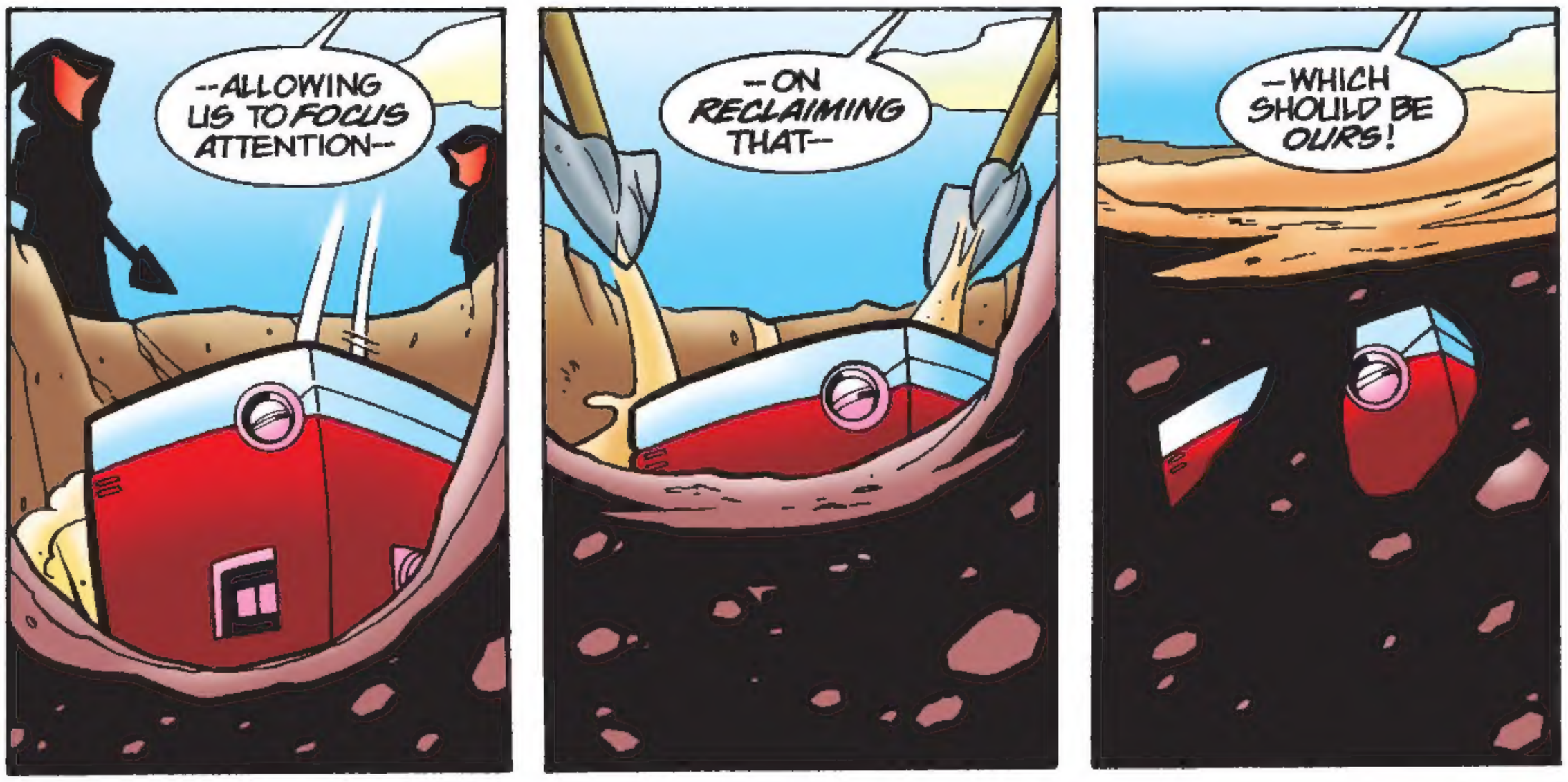
HOWEVER POWERFUL *DIMITRI* MAY BE, GRANDFATHER--

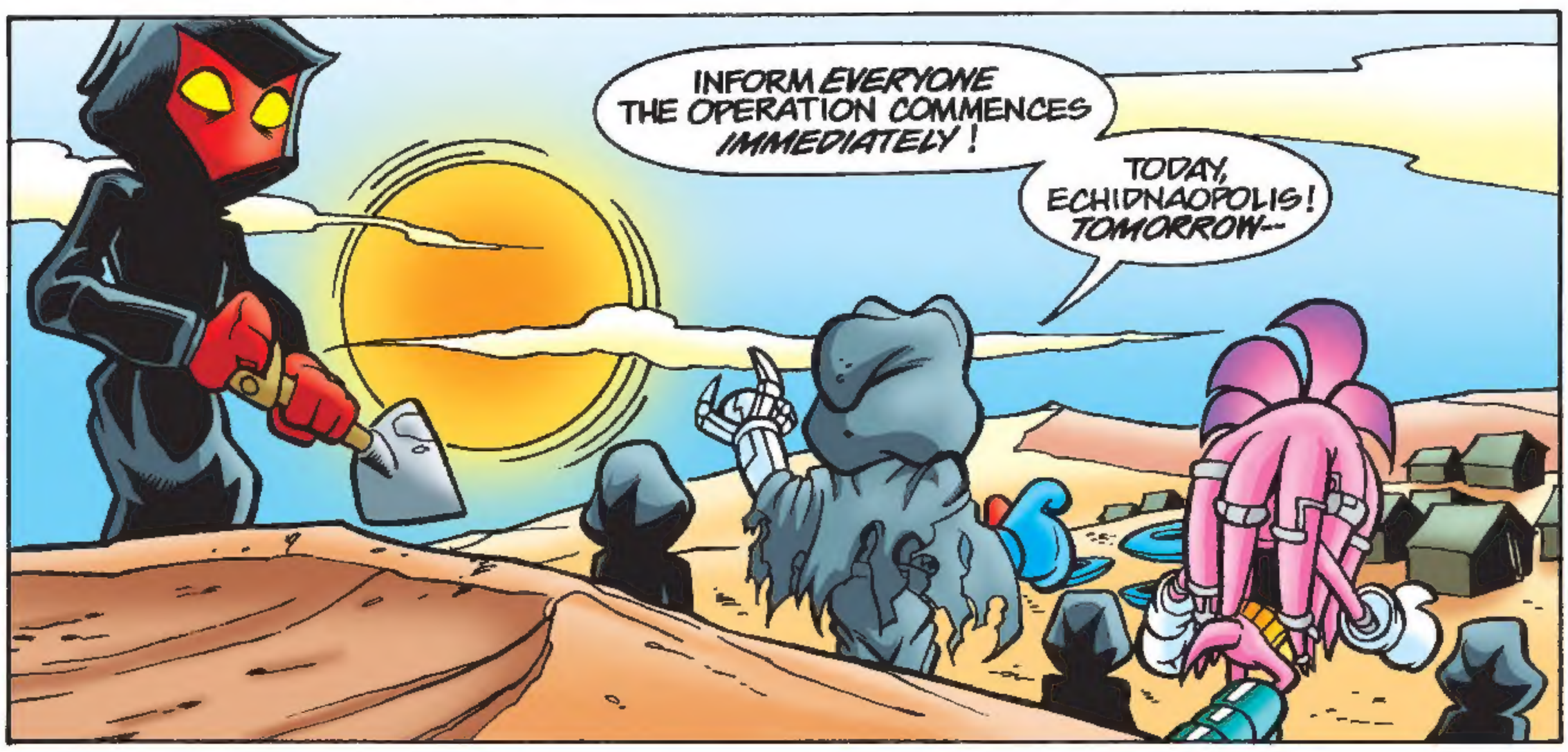
"-- OUTWITTING HIS *LIEUTENANTS* IS WELL WITHIN THE REALM OF *POSSIBILITY*!"

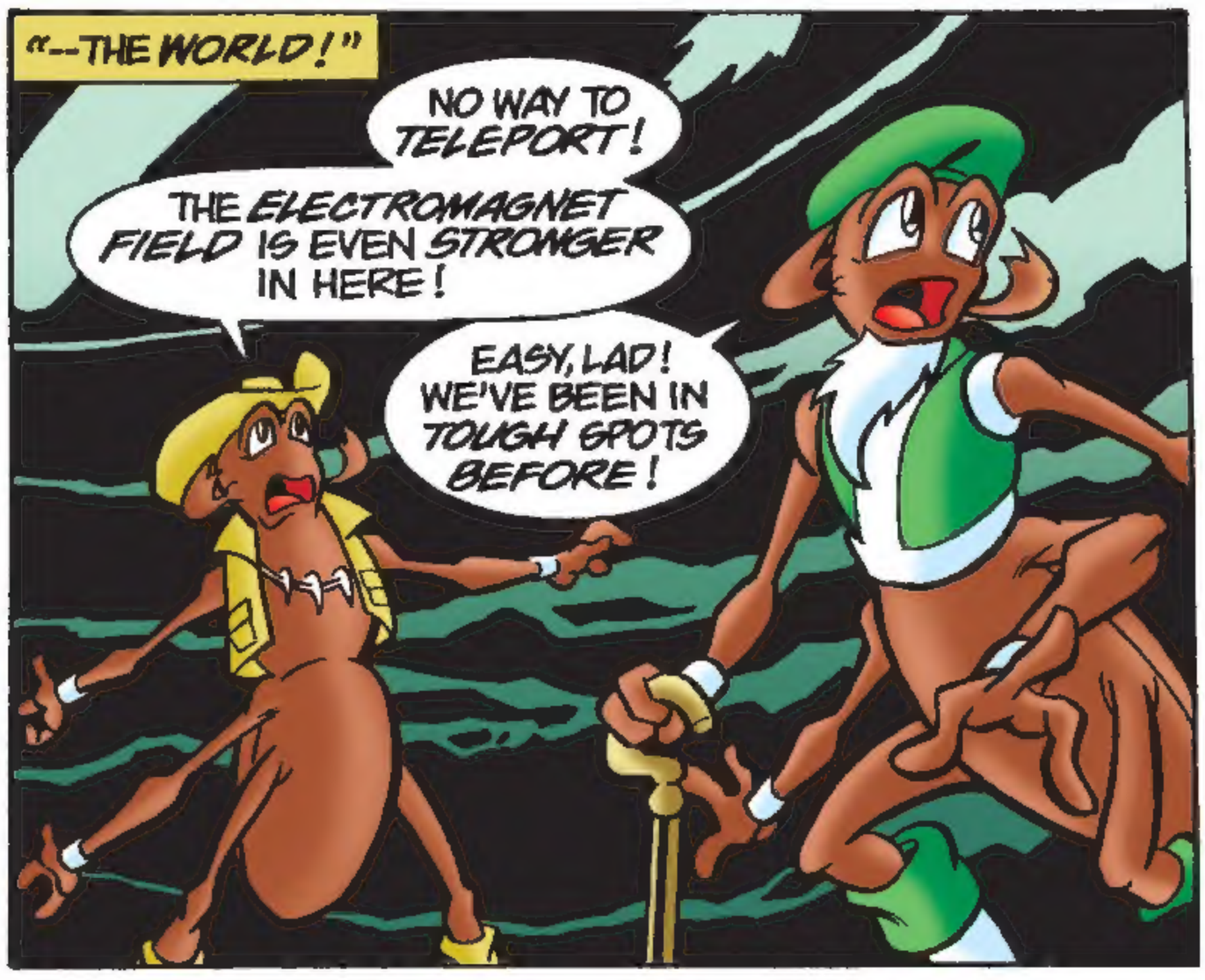
I'VE IMAGINED THIS DAY DAWNING FOR A *LONG* TIME!

WITH BUT THE *TOUCH* OF A BUTTON--

"--I *ELIMINATE* ONE SET OF *PROBLEMS*--"


--ALLOWING US TO FOCUS ATTENTION--
--ON RECLAIMING THAT--
--WHICH SHOULD BE OURS!


INFORM EVERYONE THE OPERATION COMMENCES IMMEDIATELY!
TODAY, ECHIDNAOPOLIS! TOMORROW--


"--THE WORLD!"
NO WAY TO TELEPORT!
THE ELECTROMAGNET FIELD IS EVEN STRONGER IN HERE!
EASY, LAD! WE'VE BEEN IN TOUGH SPOTS BEFORE!

TOUGHER THAN THIS?
I CAN'T REMEMBER--

"--EVER FEELING THIS HELPLESS!"

WHOA!!

THIS IS YOUR LAST CHANCE, KNUCKLES!

SUCCUMB TO ME-- OR ELSE!

VERY WELL, FOOLISH ONE!

IF I COULDN'T FIGURATIVELY TAKE YOU APART--

BHHRRRRRSPD!

--TAKING YOU APART *LITERALLY* WILL DO JUST AS WELL.

ENJOY LIFE AS A *NEURON*!

HA HA HA HA HA

To be continued...

(Maybe... possibly... we hope?)